SMOKE

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Edited and printed by

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PROVIDENCE *RHODE ISLAND*

QUICK CURTAIN

All the while, within the chamber
strange presences awaited our embrace
    which never came.

We stood and ached
near, nearer, and more near
    with every footfall up the corridor.
There was yet time to be alone.
(Never before had we known the generosity of seconds)
There was yet time,
and in that time, our lifetime.

All the pictures floated forward from the wall.
    upward and to the right;
    - no, - upon looking again,
    downward and to the left.

She heard the me of years - to - come say,
    "I never write you;
    "I hardly ever think of you;
    "Yet what I think and do
    "is thought and done
    "with reference to you."

Operators behind the ceiling
had tangled up the wires
and taut cords held our heads high.
    I could not turn a quarter-circle,
    nor advance the requisite half-step

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to lift my arms up, move them over
and drop my head on hers
with the abrupt simplicity of a doll.

Light pierced the leaves and flecked the mirrors;
clear and clearer, and more clear
the sun swam through the lessening rain.

We had grown wise in all things before love.

JOHN BROOKS WHEELWRIGHT

MIND IN A BODY'S SOMNOLENCE

PEOPLE were coming before me : black Nana , who would turn white, gold, to black, and die time after time in a moment; Cleopatra, made of tan sealing-wax, and encrusted with thousands of pieces of colored glass while the wax was hot; Venus, trying to toss a bird-cage into a dark blue sea while the silver handle twined tighter and farther up her arm ; Jezebel , who beat at a Convent gate, then dropped her robes and walked toward town; Maria de France, who made a line and marked it A , made another line below that and marked it B, made below that another line and marked it C, then wrote A equals B and B equals C, then she erased lines B and C, and the equation; Amy Lowell, who chanted the Song of Solomon backward and said That is my poem The Book of Hours of Sister Clotilde; and You (whoever you are), looking surprised, then suspicious, of something you thought was a snake in a bank of fog—when suddenly God (drooling at the mouth because of sensuality , repressed by impotence) came waddling down the air on planes of clouds that fell ahead of him, while following in a group sauntered Amy Lowell, Nana, Cleopatra, Maria de France, You, Jezebel, and Venus. When God got down to me, he said, "I have brought them to you who wanted them. See that you make them happy. " And I did ! And God was stretched stiff dead from watching.

RAOUL VORR

PORTRAIT IN ONE ACT

The lady in the white gown with the white parrot on her shoulder
Walks slowly down,
Under the applegreen evening
Blotted with the black pine trees,
Walks slowly down to the edge of the dark green water.

Tall and slender with her long white gown
Brushing gently over
The crisp leaves that in October
Lie on the pathway, disturbed by her
Long white gown;
She comes slowly, weaving in the green evening,
Floating through the stained air that
Shimmers around her.

The lady in the white gown with the white parrot on her shoulder
Walks slowly down,
Under the applegreen evening
Blotted with the black pine trees,
Walks slowly down to the edge of the dark green water.

WINFIELD SCOTT

RETORT COURTEOUS

His eyes are clear as rain out of a cloud,
And dark as rain when it becomes the sea.
Go north and east, calling my name aloud,
And when he answers give him news of me.
Say I have laid away the wilful shoes
That took me leagues and leagues till I was lost.
I wear light slippers, twinkling reds and blues.
Afraid to trace a pattern in the frost,
Afraid to trudge the highway that leads on
To the mad city of resounding towers
Where night is frenzied with a singing swan,
And day is sorry-sweet with broken flowers.
Look for his sudden smile and watch his eyes
Grow iridescent when you tell him this.
He is too eloquent, and far too wise
To send me any message but a kiss.

ROSALIE HICKLER

NEW ENGLAND HOMESTEAD

The windows, not too wide, shield you from skies
Now black with storm or blind with quiet snow;
Red lightning pauses here; your waking eyes
Need not acknowledge moons that waste or grow.
The ceilings you may touch with straining hands
Lie white above; even the well-designed
Doors, and the patterned walls are close and kind.
But every post and rafter understands
Peril you need not know, though you must guess;
Peril that lights the rocky land above,
And rings these acres with a restlessness
That fourteen rigid generations prove.

You do not know my meaning. And the night
Stilled to the Clock-tick, tempered to the light
Of a low candle, breathes here quietly?
Oh come and see
The whippoorwills in the old upland fields,
Throwing their nets of silver shrieking sound
Over the apple trees; drenching the ground
That never yields!

ANITA YOUNG

INFORMER

Why call her name up that bare hill
as though she still could answer,
and come to you among the rocks?

Have you forgot?

Why carry the moss-rose in your hand
for her who has not heard?

Why climb farther up hot stones
that burn your naked feet
when she will not be there to meet?
O why repeat a past that's not your lot,

or have you forgot?

(Why call her name up that bare hill,
as though she lived still
to meet you between the rocks?)

R. WADE VLIET

CHARITY

No bread
To feed the people ?
Give them cake
Instead !

And so
Through very pity
A heart must
Hungry go.

MARY H. BLODGETT

GARRET

Among the chambers of her mind
Was one more sacred than the rest,
And to this chamber she consigned
The memories she loved the best.

She stored there loosely, side by side,
Moments too dear to throw away,
And saved her bits of broken pride
To patch up on some later day.

All these she kept like childhood toys—
The books outgrown, the dolls and gowns—
To pass on to her girls and boys...
If they should want such "hand-me-downs."

W. H. GERRY

DUSK

This is the hour of peace,
For loving, for sleeping.
Come all you toilers, cease
Your sowing, your reaping.

Look where the meadow lies
Gently reclining;
Gone the day's butterflies,
Glowworms are shining.

Soft as a maiden's hair
The meadow grasses,
Combed by the wind with care
Each time it passes.

Hushed all the woods around;
Night's curtain falling.
Whippoorwills distant sound,
Calling and calling.

This is the hour of peace,
For loving, for sleeping.
Come all you toilers, cease
Your sowing, your reaping.

W. H. GERRY

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By Grace Kenyon